Bootsole Project

Transportation Report

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February 2021

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Introduction

This report describes existing and desired conditions of the transportation resources within the Bootsole project area and the direct and indirect effects on National Forest Transportation System (NFTS) roads from implementing the Bootsole Project. It also documents that there would be no significant negative effects on NFTS roads and transportation, and therefore, no extraordinary circumstances related to these resources, resulting from implementation of the Bootsole Project.

Affected Environment

Existing Condition

The Bootsole project area contains numerous NFTS roads ranging from smooth, gravel–surfaced roads to rough, primitive, and un-surfaced roads. The project area also contains roads that are not part of the NFTS (Figure 1). Main forest system roads link with county roads which link to double-lane paved State highways to form a transportation system that provides access to National Forest System lands for a variety of uses from communities in the surrounding area.

Traffic is normally low in the project area, and most traffic originates from wood gathering and recreational activities. Recreationists typically access the area via Lassen County Road 208 (Janesville Grade) and visitors to Thompson Peak and Antelope lake frequently travel through the project area. Roads in the project area are also used for off-road-vehicle riding, sight-seeing by vehicle, and logging operations.

Roads within the Bootsole Project area are managed in accordance with the Plumas National Forest Public Motorized Travel Management Record of Decision (USDA 2010).

Figure 1: Roads in the project area are used for recreation, woodcutting, and to travel to popular recreation sites. Roads conditions range from gravel-surfaced (upper right) to more primitive (lower left) to user created woodcutting roads into meadows (lower right).

Desired Condition

The desired outcome of transportation management activities proposed in the Bootsole Project is to reduce watershed impacts caused by roads.

Proposed transportation management activities are consistent with:

Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment (SNFPA) Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) Record of Decision (ROD) (USDA 2004) Standards and Guidelines for Wheeled Vehicles and Road Construction, Reconstruction and Relocation:

- Prohibit wheeled vehicle travel off of designated routes, trails, and limited off highway vehicle (OHV) use areas. Unless otherwise restricted by current forest plans or other specific area standards and guidelines, cross-country travel by over-snow vehicles would continue.
- To protect watershed resources, meet the following standards for road construction, road reconstruction, and road relocation: (1) design new stream crossings and replacement stream crossings for at least the 100-year flood, including bedload and debris; (2) design stream crossings to minimize the diversion of streamflow out of the channel and down the road in the event of a crossing failure; (3) design stream crossings to minimize disruption of natural hydrologic flow paths, including minimizing diversion of streamflow and interception of surface and subsurface water; (4) avoid wetlands or minimize effects to natural flow patterns in wetlands; and (5) avoid road construction in meadows.

Region 5 Ecological Restoration Leadership Intent to:

- Identify the minimum road system needed for safe and efficient travel for administration, utilization and protection of National Forest System lands; establish priorities and a time schedule to decommission or close unneeded roads.

Environmental Consequences

Alternative 1 – Bootsole Project

Direct and Indirect Effects

Implementation of the Bootsole project would result in short-term increases in traffic associated with moving equipment, materials, and personnel into and out of the project area. Increased traffic can impact the safety of the public and employees using the roads in the area. Standard contract provisions for traffic management and control would minimize these impacts

There would also be potential erosion associated with road reconstruction, maintenance, and obliteration; these potential effects would be short term and would be dependent on the length and timing of the project. There would be standard provisions in the contracts to require erosion control measures during operations and during seasonal closures, if needed. Integrated design features (IDFs) and Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be incorporated into project design to minimize potential impacts to roads from use and maintenance

Road repair, reconstruction, and maintenance would reduce roadway erosion and washout potential thereby reducing future road maintenance costs. Obliterating non-NFTS roads would promote vegetative recovery (particularly in meadows), decrease compaction, increase infiltration into the former roadbed, increase soil stability, and decrease erosion.

The road maintenance activities proposed would improve both public access and firefighter safety. In addition, forest thinning along roadsides would improve visibility, and therefore safety, along thinned routes.

Alternative 2 – No Action

Direct and Indirect Effects

If the Bootsole Project is not implemented roads proposed for maintenance would continue to deteriorate through use (by passenger vehicles, high clearance vehicles, off-highway vehicles (OHV) riders, etc.) without concurrent maintenance and upkeep. Non-system roads would remain physically open; use of these unmaintained, and therefore improperly drained, roads would continue to cause erosion-related and other resource damage.

References

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2004. Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Sierra Nevada Forest Plan Amendment, Record of Decision. USDA Forest Service, Region 5, Vallejo, CA. 72p.

USDA. 2010. Plumas National Forest Public Motorized Travel Management Record of Decision. USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region R5-MB-189 August 2010.

USDA. 2011. Region 5 Ecological Restoration Leadership Intent. USDA Forest Service Pacific Southwest Region. R5-MR-048 March 2011. Available at: Region 5 Ecological Restoration: Leadership Intent (akamai.net)